1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

ciputo yearly in the great initiation festival for boys and girls. Consequently as they repeat each year the lessons of their own initiation, the ceremonies are the main vehicle of Yao culture.[1]

There are also two Moslem ceremonies:

(1) *Jando*, the boys' Moslem baptism, which takes about seven days, and is usually worked in with *lupanda*:

(2) *Nsondo*, the girls' Moslem baptism, which is the same as *jando*, but usually quite separate from *ciputo*. It is important that the wife of a Moslem should have her *nsondo* so that she knows how to prepare the food properly at Ramadan.

Menstrual and Other Taboos

Menstruation is held to be dangerous. A special mat is used by the woman during this time, and is rolled up and kept during the rest of the cycle. The hut is completely replastered after menstruation. Intercourse during menses leads to disease of the man. Sexual contact is dangerous to persons at certain other periods: during initiation ceremonies, during mourning, and for babies who have not been through the protective rite. The danger is thought to lie in *ndaka*, a dread disease characterized by swelling. This may be transmitted by salt in the food. Deaths are often attributed to 'salt'. Much of the significance of the mourning is that medicines are prepared which protect the mourners against the dangers attendant on sexual activity.

Burial Rites

News of a death must be sent to the chief by a messenger carrying a single fowl. The chief gives a present of calico for wrapping the body, and a goat for the burial rites. These are called *anolo*, neighbours unrelated to the dead, who volunteer for certain duties. They prepare the body for burial and carry it in procession to the graveyard outside the village. No uninitiated person is allowed to see the funeral. All who attend the burial are prohibited from sexual intercourse for one month. After this time the prohibition is lifted by a ceremony of beer drinking and feasting, and on the following day all fires in the village are extinguished, and then relit, and the mourners are shaved. A year later beer is brewed for a final ceremony.

For a period after her husband's death a widow is unclean, and has to be purified by ritual intercourse with a man who is paid. The widow is not allowed to remarry for two or three years. A widower leaves his wife's village, after receiving a parting gift. The widows of ordinary persons are not inherited. If a man has himself a 'name' (rank and social position), he has an heir, who inherits also the wives of his predecessor. But if the heir (the maternal nephew) has married a cross-cousin (mother's brother's daughter) he would not consider the wife's mother as his inherited wife.

Before the burial the dead man's hut used to be destroyed, together with his possessions. Immediately afterwards a consultation is held as to whether retaliatory action against sorcerers is called for. The *anolo*'s duties include not only the conducting of the burial, but also the subsequent inquiry and the conduct of the second ceremony, the beer drinking, at which they shave the mourners. A man who has

[1] Main sources for girls' initiation: Hechel, 1935, p. 19; Swanson, 1, 1910, pp. 189–714, 1911, pp. 189–91; Swanson and Dewey, 1913; Duff, 1903, pp. 311–13; Abdallah, 1919, pp. 16–17; Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, pp. 193–30; Werner, 1906, pp. 126–7; Johnston, 1897, p. 402.

3:Stanner D-5 (ca.1912) 1922 FT? Yao FT?

pregnant, the meeting of the sponsors will have to be postponed until after the ceremony connected with her first quickening with child, *Litiwo*.[1] This ceremony must be performed whether the girl is regularly married or not. One party cannot ask the other for permission that both ceremonies take place at the same time. The answer would be given, "You are asking me to kill two beasts with one bullet." In rare cases, the chief may mention the marriage and *Litiwo* ceremonies taking place at about the same time, i.e. the marriage is arranged before the child is born.

Widowhood. A widow is considered unclean for a period after the death of her husband. She wears a band of palm-leaf or string around her forehead. When the period is passed and some man wishes to marry her, arrangement is made with some other man to cohabit with her for payment; she is then said to be clean and can go to her prospective husband. This ceremony is called *kukwa nguji*, "to cut the strings," or in Chinyanja, *ku-dula mkasu*, "to cut the palm"; unless it is performed, the new husband will sicken. The man introduced for the purpose is called by the Yao, *hiena*, the "hyæna," "he who comes by night."

Divorce. From time to time, married people disagree and one deserts the other. If the woman leaves the man, he has a claim against her and the man to whom she goes for all the clothes he has supplied her with during their married life. The husband usually sides with the wife's relatives and arranges that they look after the children; he does not claim them. When the husband and wife mutually wish to separate, they both meet with their sponsors and everything is duly arranged. The husband will give his wife an arrow, saying, "*M'pamba* (the arrow)," meaning, "If I come back, may it kill me." The place of the arrow may be taken by a bullet or any other object, even a piece of grass. The man will add, "*Banda, wanka, no likwasi* (rattling, rattling, it is a rat)," inferring that if his wife hears something rattling in the house, it is a rat, not himself trying to come back. There is no definite payment of compensation. If the woman marries again, she presents the "arrow" to her second husband as a sign that she has been freed from her first marriage; without this token, no man would marry her.

Actual adultery was in the old days very rare owing to the strict enforcement of rules, and the case of a woman demanding divorce on account of the adultery of her husband formed a cause célèbre. The case heard by the chief would last for days and hundreds of people would come to listen. Neighbouring Anyanja pleaders would be invited to speak and great excitement prevailed, as these latter would be accompanied by their villagers, who, to the accompaniment of continuous drumming, would sing, "*Mbuzi wanka wakwaba m'ukondi*,[2] (The bush-buck has run his head into the net)," while they ran about running their heads into their game-nets.

Other causes of separation are neglect of duty, sterility of the wife, and habitual death of the children born.

[1] Vide infra, p. 274. [2] Chin.

6: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1947) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

be noted that only 27—11 per cent. of the whole sample of 246 women—had never married and that 23, 80 per cent., of these (or 10 per cent. of the total) were under the age of 20 and therefore stood a good chance of yet marrying. Furthermore, 2 of the 4 women over 20 who had not married were known definitely to be incapable of marrying (one is insane and the other has violent epileptic fits).

There were 53 women who were divorcees or widows (21·5 per cent.), but it should be noted that 27 (or 11 per cent. of the 246 women) were over the age of 45 and therefore were past, or nearly past, the child-bearing period. Those in the younger age-groups stood good chances of remarrying. Table IV shows that though the divorce rate is high[1] remarriage is common. By the time a woman's child-bearing period has ended she has been married on the average 1·7 times. Few marriages are contracted after child-bearing ceases.

TABLE IV. *Marriages and Dissolutions of Marriage experienced by all Women over the Age of 15*

Present age	*No. of women*	*No. of marriages contracted*	*No. of divorces experienced*	*No. widowed*	*No. still married*	*No. of marriages per woman*	*No. of divorces per woman*	*No. of marriages per woman ended by death of husband*	*No. of marriages per woman still existing*
15–20	43	22	1	..	21	0·49	0·02	0·00	0·46
20–30	79	104	36	4	64	1·32	0·45	0·05	0·81
30–45	70	121	30	16	55	1·73	0·71	0·23	0·79
Over 45	54	88	29	34	25	1·70	0·57	0·65	0·48
Total	246	335	116	54	165	1·36	0·47	0·22	0·67

These statistics, showing the early age of marriage, the early commencement of child-bearing, the high incidence of marriage among women, and the high rate of remarriage during the child-bearing period, all point to the high valuation of reproduction reflected in Yao culture. This is consistent with their social structure, where the major corporate groups are kinship groups and reproduction is the principal method of recruitment to the group. Furthermore, because the standard of living is almost at subsistence level, children do not entail the economic losses they do in Western society. On the other hand, they are expected to support their aged parents when they themselves are economically independent. In other words, there are few factors militating against reproduction and many in favour of it.

We may expect the beliefs and customs surrounding child-birth to reflect the value of reproduction. For instance, the Yao distinguish clearly between women who have borne children and those who have not. When a girl becomes pregnant for the first time she undergoes a special ceremony (*litiáo*) attended only by women who have borne children. This ceremony has many of the features of a *rite de passage* and appears to mark the passing of the woman to a new social status. Furthermore, women are ascribed status according to the number of children they have borne. The word *awuali* signifies a young woman who has not yet borne a child; *awuali*

[1] Between a third and a half of the marriages contracted by women had been dissolved by divorce by the time that the child-bearing period had ended.